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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
AMBASSADOR AT LARGE  
WASHINGTON

October 31, 1962

To: The Secretary

From: S/AL - Llewellyn E. Thompson

Subject: Memorandum of Conversation -- Yuri Zhukov  
and Mr. Bolshakov -- Ambassador Thompson,  
Wednesday, October 31, 1962, 2:00 p.m.

Zhukov began the conversation by saying that at the meeting he had attended in Andover, the suggestion had been put forward from the American side that President Kennedy, Chairman Khrushchev, and Premier Castro should meet to resolve the Cuban crisis and he asked my opinion about such a proposal. I replied that I could not understand how anyone who knew of the feeling in this country about Mr. Castro could imagine that the President would be willing to meet with him, particularly in present circumstances. Zhukov said he agreed that such a meeting would be unwise and said he had suppressed any mention of this in the communique on the Andover meeting.

Zhukov then asked my opinion on the advisability of a meeting between the President and Mr. Khrushchev after the Cuban crisis was liquidated, saying he had in mind a meeting in about a month's time. He suggested that in the light of the Cuban affair, both sides would realize the necessity of resolving problems in dispute and preventing any further confrontation of a dangerous nature. Among the questions he mentioned by way of example were disarmament, atomic tests, and NATO-Warsaw Pact problems. He did not mention Berlin in this connection but added proliferation of atomic weapons when I mentioned it.

I said that I thought everyone at the top of this Government had been so preoccupied with the current crisis that they had had little time or energy to think about future steps. I said I thought there was a feeling, which had existed even before the Cuban crisis, that every effort should be made to find a way of avoiding

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confrontations of this sort. I said I could only express my personal opinions on the question he had raised and went on to say that it seemed to me more important than ever that the President and Mr. Khrushchev should not meet until there was assurance that a positive result would follow. I pointed out that the President welcomed Mr. Khrushchev's proposal for a settlement as a statesman-like act and that we had tried to discourage any tendency here to portray a settlement of the Cuban crisis as a victory or a defeat. I said he should realize, however, that there were many in this country who were describing it as a defeat for the President. He must be aware that a segment of public opinion in this country thought we should have dealt with the Cuban problem before and were now saying that had we done so this crisis could not have arisen. I also pointed out the extremely difficult position in which the Soviet action in sending missiles to Cuba had placed the President. He had gone on record in the midst of an election campaign as saying that Cuba had only defensive arms and his political opponents were making the most of this. I pointed out that this did not provide a very good setting for a meeting. In any event, I thought the first thing was to liquidate the Cuban crisis quickly. I said my own thinking along the lines of the thought he had in avoiding situations where the two nuclear powers meet head-on, was that the field of disarmament might be the most promising and I understood that our people who were concerned with these problems were looking at this aspect.

I then asked Zhukov if he could account for the sudden reversal in Soviet policy when Mr. Khrushchev had on October twenty-sixth sent the President a letter which indicated a solution along the lines of the settlement eventually reached and the very next day publicly proposing an entirely different course related to missile bases in Turkey. I said that our press had speculated that Mr. Khrushchev had made the first proposal and had been overruled. Zhukov immediately said he was certain this wasn't the case and that Mr. Khrushchev was still the boss. He said he was not in Moscow at the time but his guess would be that the talk in this country and elsewhere both by the press and others that there was a possibility of a Cuban-Turkish deal had led the Kremlin to put this forward in their interests in finding a solution. Mr. Bolshakov emphasized that there was much talk around New York about this matter.

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I said that in the light of the circumstances, we had been obliged to consider the possibility that this was simply a stalling technique. I pointed out that we did not know why these missiles had been secretly sent to Cuba and that we could not ignore the possibility that the intention was to fire them once they were in place. I pointed out that this was still a problem since we had no real evidence that they had been dismantled. I said I thought it important to them and to us that we have such evidence at the earliest possible time. Zhukov said he noted that we had said nothing in the press about the aerial reconnaissance on Monday. I said I understood that this showed some construction work had gone forward since our previous reconnaissance and while the evidence was not conclusive, there was certainly nothing on which we could rely to indicate that Mr. Khrushchev's order, which I pointed out he said had already been issued at the time of his letter of October twenty-eight, was being carried out. I suggested that the Soviets should find means to show us that this was being done and implied that until this happened we would have to find out for ourselves. Mr. Zhukov seemed to understand this and in summarizing our conversation just before leaving he stressed this point.

When Zhukov asked about lifting the quarantine, I said we understood that the Cubans had not yet shown any indication of agreeing to the necessary UN measures. I said we had no desire to embarrass them over the quarantine but said that if the Cubans continued to be recalcitrant, the quarantine might be useful. At this point I referred to Mr. Mikoyan's trip and said that I did not envy him his task. Mr. Zhukov asked if any official was going to meet Mr. Mikoyan in New York. I said my understanding was we had never been officially informed of his visit but only had received a request for his plane to stop in transit. I said that Mr. McCloy was available in New York and I thought that if Mr. Mikoyan so desired, Mr. McCloy or Mr. Stevenson would probably be available, but I said that in view of the fact that his stopover was very short and that he would have to spend considerable time with Mr. Kuznetsov, I would be surprised if Mr. Mikoyan wished to have any official conversations at this time.

In the course of the conversation, I pointed out that we had no desire in connection with verification measures to have any access to Soviet technology concerning their missiles but said it was important to know that all the ones we knew were there had gone. When Mr. Zhukov expressed the opinion that there

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has not been any nuclear missiles in Cuba, I referred to Mr. Khrushchev's conversation with Mr. Knox, and this seemed to "rock" Mr. Zhukov. He said he simply could not believe it.

Mr. Zhukov then turned to the Indian-Chinese dispute, saying he was to see Mr. Harriman next and wondered if he were in charge of massive arms deliveries to India. He pointed out that the Soviet-Chinese alliance was the cornerstone of the socialist camp and that if India received mass shipments of arms, the Soviet Union would not be able to resist demands from its allies. He thought that in the interests of both our countries that this dispute be settled on a political and not military basis and that we should press Nehru to negotiate. I said that I had nothing to do with this area and was not knowledgeable about it but could point out that Mr. Nehru was a peace-loving man who had enormous economic problems in his own country and I could not imagine that he would ask for any more arms than he considered absolutely necessary. I said I was sure we would not try to force any on him. I pointed out that India, more than almost any large country other than China, had desperate need to devote itself to its economic development. Zhukov said he had been shocked at Nehru's appearance on TV and doubted if he could physically survive the strain of this crisis. He said that if Nehru disappeared there might be chaos in India and this would be bad for everyone concerned.

Before leaving, Zhukov turned again to possible questions that might be resolved and said that we would never get anywhere on non-proliferation of atomic weapons until we had a test ban agreement, as otherwise other countries could acquire an atomic capability which could change the whole situation. He said both our countries had made such progress in atomic technology that we needed to test. He also said that the Soviets could not afford underground tests, which were very expensive. I said that as a result of the present crisis the American public and Congress would be more insistent than ever on being certain that any agreement was not violated.

On leaving, Bolshakov complained of a particular picture published in "U. S. News and World Report" showing the President talking to Gromyko and Dobrynin which labeled the Soviet officials as liars. Bolshakov said that he could assure me that neither Gromyko nor Dobrynin knew of this development (presumably the installation of medium-range missiles in Cuba.)

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